

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

While Washington law (*RCW 27.12.210*) states that one responsibility of library trustees is the “purchase of library materials and supplies”, this does not mean that a trustee is personally responsible for selecting or purchasing library materials to add to the library collection. It does mean that the board of trustees is responsible for adopting a collection development policy. A collection development policy may vary greatly in the amount of detail included, however, the ultimate purpose is to reflect the mission and the goals of the library, based on an understanding of the community, which provides guidance to staff.

Collection Development Policy Serves Multiple Purposes

The collection development policy is an umbrella incorporating direction for many activities as well as philosophical choices. A collection development policy should include a statement or overview of:

- **Library intention to purchase** clearly identified categories of materials, the subject and/or format priorities based on the needs and interests of the entire community, not just current users. In a system, it considers the varying needs of the communities served.
- **Support for intellectual freedom** for adults, for children, and diverse viewpoints. It includes the Library Bill of Rights, the derivative statements adopted by the American Library Association, and the Washington Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Statement.
- **Acknowledgment of copyright and licensing obligations** that impact the use and duplication of materials owned by the library or contracted resources such as online databases.
- **Intent to regularly assess and evaluate** the status of the collection.
- **Intent to regularly discard** outdated, rarely used, or dog-eared titles. It includes guidelines for handling discarded library materials
- How the library will **evaluate gifts/donated materials**, and any accompanying restrictions or directions for the use of the materials, before accepting the materials.
- **Preservation and conservation efforts** that will be made, particularly addressing historical materials that may need preservation or will be candidates for digitization. It also includes guidance for replacing materials.

Benefits of a Written Collection Development Policy

The benefits of a written collection development policy are many. Some of them include:

- The policy represents an agreement with the entire community of potential users of what they can or cannot expect the library to purchase and maintain in the collection.
- It corresponds to actual community needs because it incorporates the information and decisions that resulted from long-range or strategic planning.
- The policy is a primary document in defending against potential censorship. It displays the research, planning, and impartial judgment applied to selecting materials.

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- It guides staff so they can continually focus on identified priorities. It moves the selection process away from individual preferences or bias. It identifies who is responsible for selection and how requests from the public will be handled.
 - It balances the selection process by setting criteria or standards for selection that result in quality choices.
 - It provides for continuity throughout staff and/or board changes in personnel.
 - It serves as the framework for budget allocations and offers accountability for the use of funds.
 - It functions as an assessment tool for determining how well the library is meeting its goals for serving the community.

What Does a Collection Development Policy Include?

A collection development policy should cover the following topics:

- **Mission:** The library mission is translated into an overview of how the collection will meet community needs. It includes reference to relevant long-range goals.
- **Audiences:** This segment describes the intended audience for the policy, including the library board of trustees, the community, city council or other governmental authorities, library staff, and others.
- **User Groups:** The policy describes the customers of the library and how the library balances the customer priorities for service. For example, acquiring materials for adult information needs before preschool materials, or vice versa. The user group priorities are based on demographic studies and/or patron surveys that have contributed to the library planning process.
- **Overview of Collections:** This statement briefly describes the primary strengths of the collection, the formats, and the level of support that the library intends to continue.
- **General Statements, Policies or Notes that Apply to the Entire Collection**

Selection Responsibility

This statement identifies the team or staff positions that select materials. It also includes how public requests for purchase are considered.

Selection Criteria

The criteria statement delineates the factors that selectors will weigh as they determine whether a title will be purchased. A few potential criteria include the relationship to existing collection, reviews, suitability for intended audience, and format.

Gifts

The policy establishes whether gifts of materials, or monetary donations for specific collections, are accepted and whether there are conditions for acceptance. Disposal of gifts must be addressed.

Intellectual Freedom

This section affirms the importance of intellectual freedom to the community that the library serves. It usually includes the Library Bill of Rights and other documents endorsed or adopted by the library's governing body. Other policies that relate closely to intellectual freedom issues are the Internet policy, children's access to materials policy, gift policy, the display and exhibit policy, and the meeting room use policy.

Copyright and Licensing

This section affirms that the library will uphold its copyright and licensing obligations, including notification of the public of their rights and obligations. (See Chapter 15.22 -15.24 Copyright Policy.)

Collection Maintenance

This statement identifies the team or staff positions that are responsible for maintenance as well as the scope and procedures for weeding, preservation, and/or replacement of materials.

Duplicate Copies

This states the policy for purchasing and maintaining multiple copies of a title in the collection.

Cooperation

This section addresses support for resource sharing including accepting interlibrary loan requests. It also addresses formal or informal cooperative collection development agreements that may impact the selection of library materials.

- **Description of the Subjects and Formats of Collections**

This statement, which may be extensive, describes the criteria for selecting the library collection formats such as periodicals, microforms, fiction, non-fiction, maps, etc.

This statement is a detailed overview of the non-fiction collection by classification scheme that describes your current collecting goal and your intended collecting goals.

What Materials Does a Library Collection Development Policy Address?

Today's collection development policy must address highly diverse formats. Although books are still a staple, the same title may be available for purchase in several formats affecting the ability of the library to provide services desired by their customers. Here are just a few of the variations:

- Books – available in print, audio, Braille, or downloaded via the Internet.
- Magazines, journals, and newspapers – available in print, on CD ROMs, via licensed electronic databases, online from the publisher.

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- Government publications – available in print, microfilm, microfiche, CD ROMS, electronic databases.
 - Maps and photographs – available in print, microfiche, digitized, electronic databases.

A Caution: Dispersing and/or Discarding Library Materials

Policies and procedures for discarding and disposal of surplus and obsolete library materials can be a sensitive and complex issue in a community. The issues need to be addressed in the collection development policy.

According to *RCW 39.33.070*, a library may dispose of materials by selling them in an auction if they are valued at more than one thousand dollars. If there is no reasonable bid or the materials are valued at less than one thousand dollars, the library may directly negotiate the sale of materials to a public or private entity. Materials that are deemed to have no value may be recycled or destroyed.

The wording of this law has been interpreted in several different ways by local auditors, library directors, Friends of Library groups and citizens. At this time, the law has not received official clarification.

A board of trustees may wish to clarify the local approach to this issue and work with local government officials, especially the auditor, to reach an agreement on how the library will handle disposal of materials.

Challenges to Library Materials

Collection development policies also need to include a section relating to customer requests for the library to “reconsider” library materials. The procedure for handling these complaints should describe every step, from the initial response to the complainant through the highest appeal. The American Library Association Office of Intellectual Freedom has many resources available at <http://www.ala.org> including sample procedures and forms. The policy needs to emphasize that staff will provide the initial review and response to requests for reconsideration, and that if a challenge is sent directly to the board the board will forward the item to staff for the initial response.

Chapter 6 of this manual includes an article that highlights ways that the board might prepare for challenges that may progress to the level of board consideration.

Many libraries adopt a “Request for Reconsideration” form that must be completed in order to provide the library with the information needed to thoughtfully consider a challenge. The form should include a description of the reconsideration process, and make clear that the completed form must be submitted for the library to proceed with a reconsideration request.

In addition to standard information about the individual including name, address, and telephone the Request for Reconsideration form might ask:

Do you represent yourself? ____ An Organization? ____

Resource on which you are commenting:

____ Book ____ Video ____ Display

____ Magazine ____ Library Program ____ Audio Recording

____ Newspaper ____ Electronic information/network (please specify)

____ Other

Title

Author/Producer

What brought this resource to your attention?

Have you examined the entire resource?

What concerns you about the resource? (Use other side or additional pages if needed)

What action do you recommend that the library consider?

What resource(s) would you recommend to replace this work?

Are there resource(s) you suggest to provide additional information and/or other viewpoints on this topic?

OTHER RESOURCES FOR LIBRARIES

Contributed by: Jan Ames, Director
Washington Talking Book and Braille Library

Eligibility for Service

Although many public libraries purchase audiobooks and large print books, the availability of these titles is quite limited. Libraries should link their customers who are unable to read regular print with the free public library service of the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library. Anyone who is blind, visually impaired, deaf/blind, physically disabled and unable to hold a book, or has a learning disability is eligible for the service.

Services and Materials

Services from WTBBL include circulation of cassette, braille, and large print books; a local braille and tape transcription service; a children's program; reference service; and a Radio Reading Service. In addition, the special machine needed to play the cassette books is loaned to users, and both books and machines go through the mail, postage free to the user.

Support of the WTBBL

WTBBL is a part of the network of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress, which provides machines and books and the free mailing. The Washington State Legislature provides operating costs through a line item in the Washington State Library's budget. The State Library then contracts with the Seattle Public Library to administer the program.

RESOURCES

INTERNET WEB SITES

American Library Association. Office of Intellectual Freedom. *Coping with Challenges. Strategies and Tips for Dealing with Challenges to Library Materials.*
http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/coping_inf.html

Arizona State Library. *Collection Development Training for Arizona Public Libraries.*
<http://www.lib.az.us/cdt/index.html>

Washington Talking Book and Braille Library
<http://www.spl.org.wtbbl/wtbbl.htm>